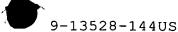## WE CLAIM:

1. A method of initiating communications using a persistent virtual team environment instantiated by a collaboration services suite for facilitating collaboration between members of a team, the method comprising steps of:
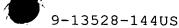
providing a graphical interface adapted to enable a person to interact with the virtual team environment to select each one of: a personal identifier associated with a respective team member; and one of a plurality of different types of communications; and

initiating the communications session using the selected personal identifier and type of the communications.

2. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the types of communications comprise: 1-way messaging; 2-way messaging; voice; and multi-media.

3. A method as claimed in claim 2, wherein 1-way messaging comprises one or more of paging, and e-mail.

4. A method as claimed in claim 2, wherein 2-way messaging comprises instant messaging (IM).

5. A method as claimed in claim 2, wherein multi-media communications comprises one or more of: document sharing; application sharing; 1-way video conferencing; and 2-way video conferencing.
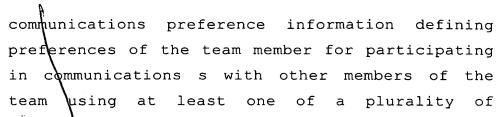
6.   A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the graphical interface comprises at least one communications type icon representative of a respective type of communications.

7.   A method as claimed in claim 2, wherein each communications type icon is associated with the personal identifier of the respective team member, and representative of a respective type of communications in which the team member is available to participate.

8.   A method as claimed in claim 7, wherein the graphical interface is adapted to enable simultaneous selection of both the personal identifier and the type of communications by selecting one of the at least one communications type icons associated with the personal identifier.

9.   A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the graphical interface comprises a menu for listing each one of the plurality of different types of communications, the graphical interface being adapted to enable selection of one of the plurality of different types of communications from the menu.

10.   A method as claimed in claim 1, further comprising a step of opening a communications initiation window in response to selection of either one or both of the personal identifier and the type of communications.

11.   A method as claimed in claim 10, wherein the communications initiation window is adapted to permit

the person to enter a description of a topic associated with the communications.

12.   A method as claimed in claim 10, wherein the communications initiation window is adapted to enable the person to send a communications initiation request to the collaboration services suite.

13.   A method as claimed in claim 12 wherein the communications initiation request includes the personal identifier of the team member to be invited to join the communication, and information concerning the selected type of communications to be initiated.

14.   A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the step of initiating the communications comprises the steps of:

using the personal identifier to send an invitation to the respective team member inviting the team member to join the communications;

receiving an invitation response from the respective team member, the invitation response representing whether or not the respective team member accepts the invitation; and

if the respective team member accepts the invitation, establishing the communications with the team member, using the personal identifier and the selected communications type.

15.   A method as claimed in claim 14, wherein the step of sending an invitation comprises the steps of:

using the personal identifier to select a respective team member profile associated with the team member, the team member profile comprising

communications preference information defining preferences of the team member for participating in communications s with other members of the team using at least one of a plurality of different communications devices;

selecting a communications device associated with the team member for receiving the invitation; and

forwarding the invitation to the team member using the selected communications device.

16. A method as claimed in claim 15, wherein the step of selecting a communications device comprises a step of searching the team member profile for communications information concerning a preferred text communications device.

17. A method as claimed in claim 16, further comprising, when communications information concerning a preferred text communications device is located, a step of selecting the preferred text communications device as the selected communications device for receiving the invitation.

18. A method as claimed in claim 17, wherein the step of forwarding the invitation to the team member comprises the steps of:

formulating a text-based invitation message suitable for display by the selected communications device; and

sending the text-based invitation message to the selected communications device.

19. A method as claimed in claim 16, further comprising, when communications information concerning a preferred text communications device is not located, the steps of:

    searching the team member profile for communications information concerning a preferred voice communications device; and

    if information concerning the preferred voice communications device is located, selecting the preferred voice communications device as the selected communications device for receiving the invitation.

20. A method as claimed in claim 19, wherein the step of forwarding the invitation to the team member comprises the steps of:

    forwarding session information concerning the invitation to an interactive voice response (IVR) interface of the collaboration service suite;

    establishing a voice communications between the IVR interface and the team member using the selected communications device; and

    announcing information concerning the invitation to the team member using the IVR interface.

21. A method as claimed in claim 14, wherein the step of establishing the communications comprises the steps of:

    using the personal identifier to select a team member profile associated with the team member, the team member profile comprising communications preference information defining preferences of

the team member for participating in communications s with other members of the team using at least one of a plurality of different communications devices;

selecting a preferred communications device associated with the team member using the selected communications type; and

establishing the communications between the person and the team member using the selected preferred .communications device.